If you would like to see what we've been saying over the past two decades or so, we will send you a random selection of 18 back issues of this paper for only 3.00.

For 5.50 we will send you D. K. Swearer's *Dialogue: the Key to Understanding Other Religions.* If you are interested in how a Christian should relate to the world's great religions, this is a good place to start. He has a chapter on how the Buddhists view Christianity.

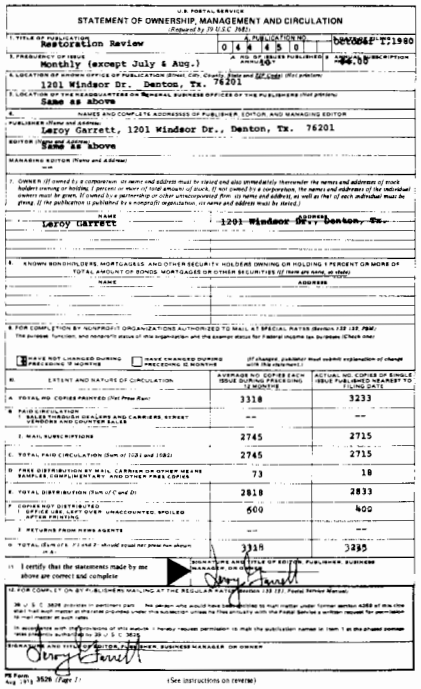
OUR CHANGING WORLD

Maybe you knew that John D. Rockefeller IV is governor of West Virginia, but nto that he recently said: "Alexander Campbell was a great American and citizen of the Mountain State who represents the noblest aspirations of our people." The occasion was a state grant for drawings of Campbell's old home for the National Archives. The Campbell Mansion is the third site in Bethany to be made part of the Archives.

The Institute for the Study of Christian Origins in Tuebingen, Germany refers to itself as "A Restoration Movement in the Land of the Reformation Helping to Launch the Next Reformation." That's not bad in that it puts "Restoration Movement" (not the best term to use) in the right context.

The Burke Rd. Church of Christ in Pasadena, Texas has done a *first* in Church of Christ history insofar as I can ascertain. They have employed a *woman* youth minister! Should you see Debbie Harris do her thing with young people (and older ones too for that matter!) as I have, you would understand why they chose to "do" history in this regard. Never say we aren't changing!

I enjoy the news and notes from all over. And it intrigues me to watch how you bridge the gap between the rather narrow mainline "Church of Christ" attitude of fellowship and that of the wider universal church fellowship. I am presently part of a fellowship that does not stress the wider concept for a number of reasons, but I sometimes feel we do ourselves a great disservice by not experiencing the joy that could be available to us there. — *Claudia Templer, Columbia, Mo.*



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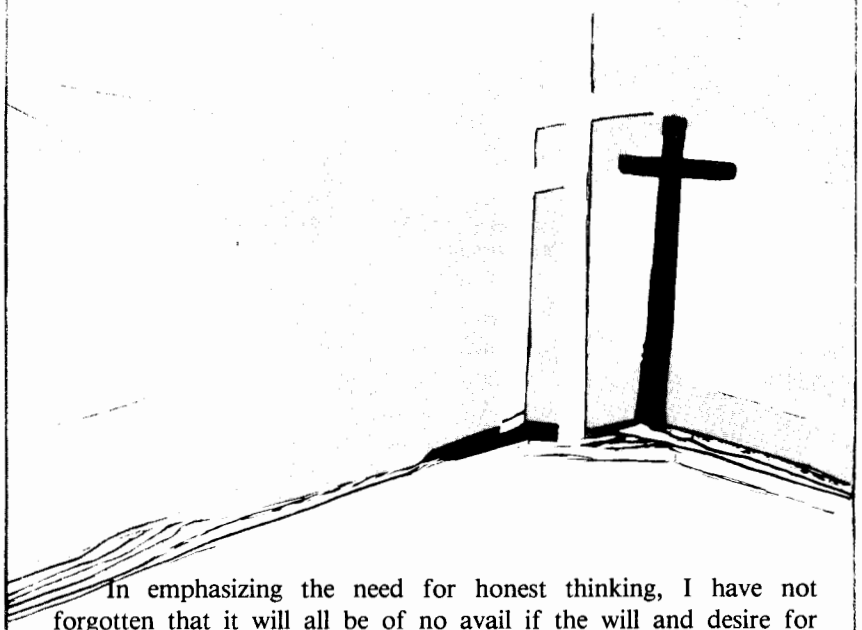

In emphasizing the need for honest thinking, I have not forgotten that it will all be of no avail if the will and desire for reform are not present. There is no place, we are told, for emotion in honest and clear thinking. True, emotion cannot take the place of thought, but it can stimulate, inspire, and clarify thought, if the emotion be noble. All great reformers were inspired by a noble passion: love for their fellow men, hope of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth, and a faith that could remove mountains.

— *R. W. Jepson, Logician*

Vol. 22, No. 8 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **October, 1980**

FALLACIES OF IRRELEVANCE

We are saying in this series that the mind matters. Even when God is out to touch the heart, which is the essence of religion, he does so through the mind. Feelings are vitally important for a meaningful faith, but those feelings are to be anchored to an informed, logical mind. To say "I *feel* it in my heart" can be both shallow and deceptive unless emotion is grounded in God's revelation. By revelation we do not refer to dreams and visions that most every enthusiast comes up with, but to those principles and ideas that the Spirit of God revealed to the chosen envoys of heaven, the apostles of Jesus Christ.

This is what the apostle is saying in Eph. 3:2-3. "The stewardship of God's grace," he says, "was given to me for you." *Given to me for you!* Paul calls this revelation in verse 3, and says he wrote it down so that it might be read and understood. He makes it clear in verse 5 that such revelation is made known only to the apostles and prophets through the Spirit. We can rightly be suspect of any other claims to revelation. And we can thank God that he has revealed his will in such terms that we *can* understand by the application of our minds, provided they are open and searching. If we really desire to understand, we will be on guard of the fallacies Satan uses to divert our minds. He will even bamboozle us into believing that the mind does not really matter all that much. It is not principles and ideas that are really important, he will tell you, but your feelings.

Some logicians, for the sake of simplification, place all fallacies within two categories: *irrelevance* and *ambiguity*. These sinister twins do more havoc with human thought than can be imagined. They are handmaidens to Satan's design to sell the human race a bill of goods. What better way can evil forces warp our souls than by confusing our thinking? A logic book beside me lists thirteen common fallacies of irrelevance. These are, unfortunately, as common in the church, including the pulpit and the press, as in the world. One of the most prevalent is called *appeal to force,* which uses threat and intimidation to get folk to accept a given conclusion — such as attending every service of the church. It is a wilfull sin that incurs God's wrath to miss a single service! Christian reasonableness would have

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us make the assembly such a joyous and edifying experience that we could not keep the people from coming. To browbeat those that are there with irrelevant threats of hell and damnation is not only foolish but a contradiction to the very idea of Body life.

The "band-wagon argument" provides still more irrelevance, and we get our fill of this in the media, where some sexy macho from Marlboro country implies that we just aren't with it unless we smoke like his kind do. Did you ever see some emaciated weakling advertising cigarettes? And of course they place a dazzling dame beside everything from automobiles to breakfast cereals. This fallacy begins to lay a heavy hand on us as kids in school. Peer pressure is the most powerful motivating force with our young people. That "everybody does it" is reason enough to experiment with drugs and sex. There is no easy way to combat this evil, and it certainly does no good to panic and blow one's stack. A quiet and loving appeal to reason sometimes works. *Think and act for yourself!* is an appeal that may reach the finer instincts.

But before we gang up on the kids we should face the fact that in the church we are worse than they are in riding the band-wagon. We often parrot the party line when we haven't the slightest idea what we are talking about, and we'll join in and criticize "the other church" or "the sects" because it's the accepted thing. We'll put down some brother that we don't even know, and who may be a delightful Christian, only because everybody else is down on him. If we uncritically and illogically follow the preacher, we should be more tolerant of our yourth when they follow the crowd. We all need to learn that a band-wagon does not necessarily go to heaven. God may not be interested in your appeal to "the way they do it in Nashville" or "our preachers have always taught it that way." Conclusions should be drawn from the principles and ideas that God has revealed to you in scripture. Your Bible may be saying to you (as we may say to the kids), *Think and act for yourself!* If that puts you on the band-wagon, OK. If not, walk alone. You'll probably find others who have "taken the way not travelled," as Robert Frost liked to say it.

One of the most insidious fallacies among our churches is called "fallacy of accident," which is not well named. It is the error of supposing that a general rule applies to every situation. It does not recognize that "accidential" circumstances may make the rule inapplicable in some cases. It may be generally true, for example, that sparodic church attendance reflects a lack of commitment, but that hardly applies to the dear sister (whom some would judge) who does well ever to attend the assembly at all, considering her brutal treatment at home. Lying may always be questioned, but we have to recognize that there are lies and then there are lies. Our judgments cannot be the same in all cases. Even the young people that are shacked up together may deserve less censure, depending on circumstances,

that some of our "proper" couples in the way they live together — in the event we have to censure at all.

A cruel use of this fallacy is in reference to the divorced. They are told that divorce is a sin and that one is to quit sinning when she becomes a Christian, which means she is to dissolve her second (or third) marriage and "make her wrongs right." This has reached serious dimensions among Churches of Christ, with some congregations denying baptism and membership to the divorced. There is far more wrong with this than a fallacy of irrelevance, for the premises themselves may be questioned. It is true as a general rule that reparation should be made for wrongs done, but it cannot be applied to everything in life that goes wrong. We can apologize for an offense and we can repay stolen money (usually), but how do we undo the damage of a broken marriage? Too, another marriage (Jesus acknowledges that the divorced who remarry *are* married and not just living together) is now on the line. Divorce may have been a sin, but it is fallacious to conclude that all sins can be dealt with in the same manner. Some things in life are, unfortunately, irreparable. God's mercy receives a person as she is in her penitence and allows her a new beginning at that point, without having to do the impossible with her fractured life.

The last fallacy considered here is *irrelevant conclusion,* which has been eating our lunch all these years. This is the case when an argument claims to prove one conclusion, which may be relevant, when in fact it proves something else, which is not relevant. A good example of this is the case of a very fine Abilene professor who has written a book on the case for acappella music in the church, which is presumably a contribution to "the music question." The book has received good billing for years and the professor has been called on now and again to lecture on the topic — the case for not using an instrument, as if that were the issue.

I wrote to this professor that his conclusion is irrelevant to the issue it proposes to address, for *no one questions a place for acappella music.* The issue is whether our sisters and brothers who elect to use an instrument are sinning, or whether we have the right to make the way we do it a test of fellowship. This fallacy is also present when we labor to prove some person or church wrong on particular doctrinal issues, as if being wrong led to the conclusion that such ones either are not Christians or not deserving of our fellowship or both. It may be conceded that the Baptists, for example, are in error about certain things; but it does not follow that we can therefore have no association with them. To prove that one is in error (and who isn't on some things?) does not prove he is not a Christian. Indeed, our exclusivism is built around a cluster of irrelevant conclusions.

Our irrelevancies in fact well nigh do us in on every front, like the pharisee that thanked God that he was not like other men. He was in bad shape and didn't know it, counting himself as righteous while setting all

others at naught. We talk about our growing budgets and increasing contributions, and even sometime venture to say, "We're doing more for missions than any church in the city." In the light of this fallacy the response to all such is, *So?* It is also the response to our frequent efforts to justify our sins, such as "If I never do anything worse than that . . ." *So?* What we often affirm (assuming it to be true) does not prove what we are implying. OK, you have no worse sin than holding that grudge against the sister that put you down. Assumed true. Does that mean you are righteous? OK, the Baptist minister across the street is wrong about some things he preaches. *So?*

We started with a word about principles and ideas, through which God has revealed something of his will to our minds. This is the stuff of which logic is made. We are to *think* about what God has revealed, *pondering* the ideas and *studying* the principles. Principles can be drawn only from what God has revealed. Those who speak of "the principle of silence" are talking nonsense. No logical conclusion can be drawn from what the Bible does not say, except that it does not say whatever it does not say! We can reason only about what God has revealed, and reasoning is the drawing of conclusions. It is not appropriate for us to reason or draw conclusions from what God has said nothing about. It is the essence of irrelevancy. If God has not revealed it, it is presumptuous as well as irrelevant for us to draw conclusions about it. If you check it out you will find that most of our difficulties are over things that are not clearly and distinctly revealed.

I've been reading *Luke* lately. The beloved physician was a master of detail, using facts, principles, and ideas to suit his purpose in laying the gospel before Theophilus. Luke wasn't quite satisfied with any other record, possibly not even Mark's, at least not for the purpose at hand. Facts. Luke gathered them like a researchist working on a Ph.D. thesis. If one reads this account with a mind open to one question, *What is he saying to Theophilus?,* it opens like a morning flower and comes alive in God's light.

Luke was a logician *par excellence.* He "followed all things closely for some time past," which means that he applied his mind to it for a long time. His purpose was to assault Theophilus' mind with *facts,* "that you may know the truth." He allowed for no diversion. No monkey business. He stayed with facts, ideas, principles, the stuff that scripture is made of. This time around in *Luke* I was impressed with the simplicity and the logic of the narrative. Luke believed that the mind matters, and he was writing for the sake of being understood.

If all the Bible would mean this to us, a hunger for what God has revealed, what a blessing it would be. Facts, principles, ideas from God's revelation in scripture. We will naturally tend to be reasonable and logical when we are committed to what is revealed. When we turn to our visions,

dreams, speculations, theories, and even to "what God revealed to me," we are moving away from the facts of scripture and are likely to get into serious trouble. When you have the likes of the wonderful story Luke told, what need have you of visions and revelations of your own, especially when you remember that others have still more visions and revelations, all in competition with each other?

To give in to fallacies of irrelevance is a bum rap and a hard way to live. It stifles the mind and feeds sectarianism. It suppresses our nobler instincts for growth and freedom and locks us in to a small world that keeps getting smaller. If we will love God with all our minds as well as with all our hearts, he will give us free, expanding minds, joyously luxuriating in the glories of what the Spirit has revealed. If the mind really matters, it really matters what we do with it. — *the Editor*

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T LEAVE

A letter from Fern West, one of our readers in Palisade, Nebraska, states that he has been in the Church of Christ for 26 years and that he's within an inch of leaving. His letter was motivated by the piece in this journal by Dan Rogers, who had decided he could not fellowship anyone who did not agree with him on certain issues. He further describes his situation in these words:

"I don't know what our preacher schools are teaching. We get just young preachers out here as our money doesn't buy big name preachers. All they preach on is ripping up the other churches or fighting among ourselves, or musical instruments and other hobbies we love to rail about. That's all I've heard for 26 years and I'm fed up with it. Why can't we preach Christ and edify the members instead of constant dissension?"

I wrote to Fern, whom I have never met, asking for permission to use his letter in this article, and promising that I would reply to it publicly since there are many with his problem. I am urging him and all those with his problem to hang in and not leave. I now give the reasons for this position.

While there are of course exceptions to the rule, we should think in terms of *growing where we have been planted.* And that is the secret of being able to bear up in oppressive situations, *personal growth.* We may not be able to change others, but we can let our own light shine by reflecting the brightness of the Sun of Righteousness. When we are beset by sectarianism, we have a peculiar opportunity to be Christ-like, for this was part of what he had to bear. He came to serve, not to be served. He did not think about what he could get out of church but what he could

contribute. Once his home congregation kicked him out (Lk. 4:29), he was not deterred. He kept right on ministering in the synagogues. If we are truly his disciples, then we too may have to suffer, even within the church. We are less than faithful disciples if we spend our pilgrimage in this world looking for places where we will be comfortable.

Why must we *go* anywhere? If we resolve to be used of God where we are (somehow!), He will use us. It may not be in ways we would prefer, but He will cause us to grow where we are, even if we are sometime stepped on. The crucial point is that we ourselves live within God's will, being Christ-like. We must not waste time and energy complaining of the darkness. God has never specialized in opposing darkness. He just turns on the light, especially *the* Light, and the darkness comprehends it not. Is this not our mission? Our light is not likely to overpower darkness if we insist on avoiding dark places.

Moreover, the response from those who leave is not all that encouraging, for they often find similar situations wherever they go. Since sin is common to us all, churches are not all that different. One church's weakness is another's strength, and vice versa. We do not usually escape problems by taking off.

Equally important is the fact that Churches of Christ badly need the likes of Fern West. If the reform-minded leave, who will conduct the coming reformation among our people? All over the country I find "the fellowship of concerned ones" at their posts doing what they can, and they are being used of the Lord to change things for the better. What a loss it is when such ones grow weary and leave! We must remember that by heritage and commitment we belong to the reformed tradition, which means that we realize that the church will never be perfect in this world and that it is our mission to be forever reforming it. This is how we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Reformers get their noses bloodied.

Besides, the likes of Fern West want to be around for all the excitement that is on the horizon. It is a rich experience to share the spiritual spoils of victory over partyism. Mal. 4:2 promises that when the Sun of Righteousness shines on people's lives they will go forth as calves out of a stall, happy and free. I've delighted many times in such a sight. When we walk in his light rather than the shadows of partyism, we learn to reach out, to wait, to pray, and to think. There is something contagious about the happy and free among us, and their tribe is increasing. The changes are too numerous to recount. Young and old alike are sick and tired of partyism, exclusivism, superficiality, and ignorance. And they are not all leaving. They are fighting back, not with carnal weapons, but with that weapon more lethal than all the strongholds of Satan, "the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13).

Churches of Christ will eventually be far more spiritual, open, reasonable, and responsible than they are now. The handwriting is already on the wall. Fern West is distressed by the preacher schools, but I know several of their graduates who are not buying the whole bill of goods. One of them called me recently, a product of one of the most rigid of the schools, to tell me that he was in contact with six of his former classmates and that all of them were now marching to a different tune. One day the free, open churches will be the majority. We will one day be making meaningful contributions to the Body of Christ at large, reaching out in fellowship to other believers without surrending any truth that we now cherish.

Now that those days are dawning upon us you don't want to be off somewhere else, do you? We need all the help we can get for the victory that is sure to come. Of that victory I am fully confident.

This is not intended as a put-down of those who have already left or who feel they must. No rule works for everyone, and each one must decide for herself. When people feel that Jesus can no longer be Lord over their lives in their present situation, they may have to walk out and start over. We have numerous walk-out churches, and I do not fault them. Usually these remain Churches of Christ, *open* and *free*, to use our terms, and they do what they do as peacefully as possible, which is a new chapter in our history.

We are referring to those who are fed up with "us," who are threatening to go to some other denomination. Some of these may have to do just that, and when they do we should still accept them as our brothers and continue loving them just as much.

I only want such ones to realize that they may be able to grow better and bear more fruit where they have been planted. It is usually a mistake to walk out on one's heritage, especially when it is prized as much as most of our people prize their heritage. And ours is a reformation heritage that recognizes the fact that the job is not yet complete. We need everybody's help, each according to her own talents.

"Think back on the days of old, think over the years, down the ages. Ask of your father, let him teach you; of your elders, let them enlighten you" (Dt. 32:7) — *the Editor*

Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.

— *Oliver Goldsmith*

SUMMONED TO COME UP HIGHER

W. Carl Ketcherside

The year 1971 will be remembered by different people for various reasons. Southern Californians will recall the severe earthquake which resulted in buckled freeways, and 62 deaths, with more than a billion dollars of damage. Space enthusiasts will recall it as the year when the astronauts of Apollo 14, led by Alan Shepard, spent 10 hours exploring the lunar surface. Revolutionaries will remember it as the year of the bomb in the basement of the United States Capitol, which resulted in $300,000 damage.

Indians will recall it as the time when Federal marshals occupied Alcatraz Island which had been seized by representatives of various tribes who hoped to make of it a cultural center. Theatrical buffs will remember it because of the opening of the John F. Kennedy Center for the performing arts in Washington. Felons will call to mind the occupation of the state prison in Attica, New York, when 34 of their number died with 9 of their hostages in the brief battle with state police and sheriff's deputies. Blacks will recall the death of Ralph J. Bunche, under-secretary general of the United Nations, who received the Nobel peace prize in 1950. He was the first Negro Nobel Laureate, and a man of distinction.

Only yesterday newspaper headlines screamed these events. The hearts of men palpitated with pride or failed them for fear as they read them. How much a part of the dim past they now seem. How far away they appear. How remote they are from our present busy lives. There is no Nobel prize for those who labor for spiritual peace. But there is a noble reward at the end of the way. So our own striving for peace among believers went on. It seems almost incredible that I was engaged in 24 meetings in 16 states. These were in a context that reached from ocean to ocean and from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

I have recently read again of the travels of the pioneer proclaimers. By steamboat down the Ohio, by stagecoach through forests and across the prairies beyond, and then by horseback along faint trails they made their way. Wherever they went the light shone. Now I can board a jet in Saint Louis and I am within three hours of any place in the United States. What a responsibility this lays upon me. I seem to have accepted the challenge in 1971, for I was away from home more than I was at home. I must tell you about a few of these encounters as they are part of the warp and woof out of which the pattern of life has been woven. But first I must inject a note of sadness for the year was one in which some of my dearest friends were summoned to come up higher.

Bob Haddow was a real inspiration to me. He was completely paralyzed. Yet he became a great reader. He laboriously formed letters and

words and wrote to me. He came wherever I was in California in a special van in which his bed could be hauled. His mother always accompanied him, driving the vehicle. Generally his grandmother was also along. He believed in what I was doing. He dreamed the same dreams as myself. It was in his home I first met Harry Robert Fox, Jr., recently home from long service in Japan, and became convinced that I was in the presence of one of the humblest, most erudite and well-read minds I had ever had contact with. Subsequent contacts did not change my thiniking. I wept when I learned that Bob Haddow's spirit had wrenched itself free from its twisted clay tabernacle.

The deaths of Dewey Elliott, of Richmond, Mo.; Noel Sutterfield, of Detroit, Michigan; and Forest Tabor, of Fairplay, Kentucky, made me realize the far-flung regions in which men lived who had affected my life. Then, in rapid succession three more were called home who had been of profound impact in my life. The first was Everett Noel, of Topeka, Kansas. He was one of the first men we met when my parents moved to Topeka. When the church divided, over what now appears to me to be trivia, he stood with us. He was always helpful to my parents during their lives. I am not sure how he looked at what I advocated as God opened my ideas to the wider vistas of His kingdom. I was gradually barred from the church of my childhood and was not invited back to where I had stood as a high school youth and parroted the party line. But I love them then and I love them now, and I realized that the death of my brother marked the passing of an era.

Louis J. Kappelman was a true man of God. Born of emigrant Lutheran parentage as was I, he accepted the plea to become a Christian only, the first time he heard it at a little Arkansas congregation back in "the sticks." He was honest, hard-working and humble. Amidst all of the pressures and tensions of the party spirit, he "kept the even tenor of his way." I stayed in his home during some of the most dramatic periods I encountered as a preacher of the gospel, when every day brought fresh accusations woven of a tissue of falsehood, and it was refreshing to talk with someone who was unperturbed and tranquil. I learned much from him and his departure wrenched my soul.

Bertha Robinson died at the age of 87, one of the noblest Christian women to ever grace God's footstool. Her life was of no significance among the kingdoms of men, but can never be overlooked in the kingdom of heaven. The cause for which we plead in the Saint Louis area owes its inception to her. Never married to any man on earth she was free to be a member of the bride of Christ. Her entire life was dedicated to caring for others. She possessed a patience which became proverbial and "admitted

openly that she was a foreigner and a refugee on earth." She did not leave home when she died, she went home. Nell and I still talk feelingly of her pilgrimage among us.

Stewart Whyte, of Alton, Illinois, was a real inspiration to me during his life. He was the victim of an incurable condition and succumbed prematurely. Homer Harvey, who was a master of the stonemason's art, and an inimitable carver, died at Middletown, Indiana. Dr. N. Rhoads, a member of an old-time family in our restoration movement died in Eugene, Oregon. I knew I would miss his encouraging letters. My life was impoverished by the deaths of these, all from different states, and different stations in life. Despite the divergency of their interests all had been very meaningful to me.

It was during this year I decided to concentrate my writing on a chapter which had deeply impressed me during my striving toward maturity. As I pointed out in my initial article "The Ascent of Faith," Romans was the Alps of the new covenant scriptures, and chapter 8 was the Matterhorn, looming high above and towering into the clouds. I analyzed every word in this impressive part of the Book of books, and at the end of the year embodied all of the material in a volume titled "One Great Chapter." It must have touched a tender chord, since we still receive orders for it long after it has gone out of print.

I began the year at the First Christian Church in Escondido, California. The series was called "College of the Bible." It brought together people from the Church of Christ to share with those in the Christian Churches. It was a time of great fellowship. We averaged 300 per night and 150 in the morning sessions. I spoke at various civic and school gatherings with good effect. I was accompanied by Al Karges, genial and hard working.

February 1-3 I was scheduled to deliver the T. H. Johnson Memorial Lectures at All Faiths Chapel, on the grounds of Kansas State University, under sponsorship of Manhattan Bible College. Each morning we conducted an informal question and answer session at the college. In the afternoons I had an unparalleled opportunity to meet the students at Kansas State. It was during this time I came to admire so greatly Brother William Lown, president of the Bible College. His non-sectarian attitude was refreshing to contemplate.

I went next to University Street Church of Christ at Eugene, Oregon. At the time the charismatic viewpoint was a matter of grave concern and many of the questions in the daily forum dealt with the subject. I tried to be as diplomatic as possible. I took the position that I would make no test of fellowship out of one's personal experience to which he testified, nor allow anyone to measure my standing with God by His own experience. This was calculated to maintain fellowship with all and forbid judging of

another by anyone on the basis of his own esoteric experience. I still think that these are the two gravest dangers, and of far more harmful tendency than any opinion relative to the work of the Spirit.

The Abilene Christian College Lectureship began on February 22, and I was scheduled to speak that night at the YWCA auditorium. I did not particularly like the arrangement. I did not want to appear in rivalry against the school, despite their opposition to me. There was little chance of my speech being assessed impartially but I made no reference to the school and dealt solely with the agonizing problem of disunity. Later I was invited to meet in an off-campus room with several students. Most of them and their parents were charismatic. The room was packed and we discussed until well after midnight.

March 3-5 found me speaking at the World Vision Crusade at Intermountain Bible College, Grand Junction, Colorado. Brother Erskine Scates was president of the school. He has since died and we have lost a friend and a good man. I was especially pleased to learn of the work among the Navahos by former students. These had gone on the reservation and lived in hogans, and shared the lives of the Indians as well as the transforming message. They found it easier to relate to these gentle tribesmen than to the world of violence outside. They had learned the language and the traditions and were accepted by even the older men of the clan.

March 15-19 I was back in Oregon, at Newport. I stayed in a home where I could see the restless waves of the Pacific Ocean foaming out against the shore. It was decided that I should speak about the Holy Spirit because of the unrest concerning His work in our day. I decided to pitch my talks on a positive note. It seemed to me there had been enough negativisim. The church had been troubled by various things with no relationship to the current issue, and I did not want to leave them divided over matters relating to the Spirit.

My talks were entitled *The Person of the Spirit; The Purpose of the Spirit; The Performance of the Spirit: The Power of the Spirit;* and the *Peace of the Spirit.* In our morning study, for which the room was filled, we attracted a mixed bag of eager students. Several clergymen of various backgrounds came. We had a large attendance from Churches of Christ. It was interesting to answer their questions and not forget my objective which was a plea for peace.

I made clear the difference between revelation and interpretation. The first is what God said. The second is what we think he meant by what he said. The first is the disclosure of the divine mind. It is perfect. The second is the application of the human mind to what was said. It may or may not be perfect. We are bound by God's Word. But no man is bound by my understanding of it. Each person upon earth must be free to engage in a private search of the divine revelation, and to deduce what it means for himself. If his deduction differs from mine, one or both of us may be wrong, but we dare not make a test of one's relationship to God out of his relationship to my understanding of the will of God.

Robert Church, who served the saints at Newport, was in agreement with my method of teaching, and we sailed through nights with a filled auditorium, in which there were Catholic priests and nuns, as well as Lutheran ministers and others. It was interesting to see how eagerly they all learned and how they grew in a love of God in five nights and four days of intense teaching.

THE MIND OF A POET

Robert Meyers

The German poet and dramatist Schiller once said, "Even the gods fight in vain against stupidity." When one reads the Gospel of John, he sees how much Christ was handicapped by people who insisted upon interpreting his poetic speech with wooden literalness.

Nicodemus mumbled about the impossiblility of a new birth, as if Jesus spoke of the flesh. The woman at the well thought Jesus was about to fix it so that she would never be thirsty again, or have to come to that wearisome place to pull on the rope. The Jews who knew the parents of Christ stared at him obtusely when he spoke of being the bread that came down from heaven. All these prosaic people stubbed their toes on literalism.

No man can understand a poet unless he has some little bit of the poet in him. And Shelley was right when he called Jesus the greatest poet who ever lived. It would be a real service to thousands of believers if teachers could demonstrate for them, often, how poetic the mind of Christ was. He spoke almost constantly in metaphors and in the lovely parallelisms of Jewish poetry, his quick mind forever searching for analogies between the world of tangible reality and the inner truths which he sought to make known. Above all else, the poetic mind is a seeker of analogies. And above all other teachers, Jesus sought them.

The kingdom, he said, is like a farmer sowing; like a mustard seed growing ten thousand times beyond its size; like treasure found in a field; like . . . like. . . like. Never the prosy definitions, never the dull dead language of laboratory demonstration. Instead, the quicksilver analogies of the truly poetic mind. And the eternal glory of poetry is that it opens out, instead of shutting in. It pushes the responsive mind out upon highroads of mental adventure. But one *must* respond.

How many dreary religious debates would have been avoided if men had responded more sensitively to the poetry of Christ instead of splitting hairs as if he had been the lawyer to end all lawyers, dividing and sub-dividing the rules so that finally a written code would be available for every conceivable situation. He was above all else a divine poet in his way of teaching.

Everyone who has ever taught school has dreamed of the ideal system of courses. It is probably part of the providence of a wise God that we do not all get to put them into practice, but I have often wished that a specific course could be made requisite for students in Christian colleges. It would explore the nature of Biblical poetry, in both Testaments, and it would stress the vital importance of interpreting poetry and prose differently. The great utterances of Christ, almost invariably poetic in their structure, simply cannot be interpreted by the rules which apply to prose. If they are, something is lost at the center which distorts or destroys the meaning.

Understood as metaphors, his sayings are vivid and illuminating. Understood as legalistic commentaries, they often provide only the ammunition for endless logic-chopping. Think how many futile debates would never take place if young men and women could be taught that Christ was a poet in love with people, not a lawyer devising the world's most elaborate book of rules!

Rather Than Dead Bricks . . .

LIVING STONES

It was something to say to an exiled people in need of identity. In pointing them to Jesus the apostle wrote, "Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious" (1 Pet. 1:4). The modern church in its desire to influence the world too easily forgets that Jesus was *rejected by men.* When the church is truly like Jesus, it is not likely to be accepted by the world that rejected him. The stone which the builders rejected, Peter reminds them, drawing upon Ps. 118, became the head of the corner. This of course was God's doing, who takes what man rejects and builds His kingdom. We should be careful about what we reject, whether ideas or people, for God may see it as "chosen and precious."

Not only does Peter refer to Jesus as a "living stone," but says that all believers are "like living stones built into a spiritual house." It is common in scripture for the church to be likened to a house, but only here are Christians pictured as stones in that house, *living* stones in fact, which makes for an interesting metaphor. Peter may have been influenced by

what the Lord said to him when he confessed that Jesus was the Christ. "You are Peter," Jesus said, "and on this rock I will build my church" (Mt. 16:18), which almost certainly refers to the church being built upon Peter as representative of all the apostles (see Eph. 2:20), which is hardly a concession to Roman Catholicism since it in no wise makes Peter the first pope.

But to Peter, whose name meant stone, *stone* must have been a cherished metaphor, especially in giving it the unique turn of *living* stone. Despite Aristotle's claim that stones, directed by an unmoved mover, are busy making their way to the center of the earth, it is difficult to conceive of anything as lifeless as a stone. But what is more boldly animated than a living stone. Since stones are building material, living stones are appropriate for the composition of "a spiritual house."

Equally characteristic of stones are their diversity, some being flat, some round, some pointed, some jagged, some rectangular, but all "chosen and precious" when brought together to make a house. A notice in a Normal, Il. newspaper, which is not far from Oblong, Il., read "Normal boy marries Oblong girl." The church made up of living stones is like that. Most of us of course suppose we are "normal," but we admit to having a lot of oblong brothers and sisters.

The mortar that binds us together into a spiritual house is fervent love, which the apostle says "hides a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 2:8), which is the secret for a united church. People who love each other like that are not going to fracture into warring sects.

Another principle of unity is seen in the metaphor of living stones in a spiritual house, which points to the diversity of any stone structure. Like stones we too are quarried from nature, which has endowed us all differently. We are no more likely to see everything alike than we are to look alike. Bricks are something else, for they are shaped arbitrarily by a mould that makes them all the same size and shape, conformity being the hallmark rather than diversity. Thank God that he has not made us like bricks with all of us thinking alike, acting alike, talking alike, like parrots in a cage. There is commonality in the spiritual house but not uniformity. Each of us bears the image of Christ in his or her own unique way.

Too, bricks are man-made, contrived to fit man's ends, while stones are cut from raw nature that necessarily allows for differences. God has formed his church, not from bricks baked in a kiln, but from stones quarried from the mountain of pagan society, often roughly hewed. These he cuts according to his own purposes, polishing some and leaving some in the rough, but each stone is precious in that he makes place for it in the house, joining it to all the other stones by the bond of his love and with Jesus as the chief cornerstone.

The clergy and ecclesiasticism in general are tempted to build an entirely different house, one that conforms to creedal blueprints and party purposes. They build with bricks baked in their own sectarian kiln and thus turn out members that are made to be carbon copies of each other. All this contradicts the very nature of the Body of Christ, as Paul indicates in 1 Cor. 12:27: "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it." He had already said, "The body does not consist of one member but of many" (verse 14). That is the mystery of unity, that one can *individually* be a member of the Body. While the individual does not lose her uniqueness, the Body does not lose its wholeness. Surely "members one of another" is one of the great ideas of scripture. It has a way of defying our effort to comprehend.

In my travels over the country I am blessed in seeing churches that are vigorously diverse and yet spiritually one. And is that not the only way we can be one, *spiritually* one, made one by the presence of the Spirit within? We do not have to worry about the diversity of our fellowship, for that is as natural as eyes, hair, and skin being different. The miracle occurs when the Spirit of God moves among us and within us, conforming us more and more to the image of Christ, each in his own unique, individual way. It is to quench the Spirit to suppose that we must all be thinking and believing alike before the Spirit will do his thing with us. Speaking of the mission of the Spirit to the church, the apostle says: "All these are inspired by one and the same Spirit who apportions to each one individually as he wills" (1 Cor. 12:11). In all these passages note should be taken of the significance of *individually*.

In the many churches I visit none is quite like any of the rest, and yet the *basic* oneness is apparent in them all, a unity in Jesus. They seem delighted that they are free to be themselves, free to think, to question, to read, without censure. Sometimes they argue, but they seem to appreciate that as iron sharpens iron, the Spirit can use them to quicken and stimulate each other. Come to think of it, it is rather boring to be around folk all time who never entertain a new idea and never put the *status quo* to the test. It is far better to be in a rocking boat than in one that never goes anywhere! — *the Editor*

A debate is to be held here in Denton, Nov. 3-6, in the Main Auditorium at NTSU on The Foundation of Ethics, particularly Utilitariansim, as championed by Joe Barnhart of the NTSU philosophy faculty, and Christian Ethics, defended by Tom Warren of East Tennessee School of Preaching. Both men are friends of mine. You will find Prof. Barnhart an interesting and resourceful speaker, a "down home" kind of guy. You will have to watch yourself or you'll like him in spite of his humanism! As for Tom Warren, he is a well-prepared, well-read man, committed to the ethics of the New Testament and the Christian gospel. He is to be commended for confronting the rising tide of humanism in this age. You will want to hear this debate. But you cannot all stay at our house, though Ouida says some of you can.

Pithy capsules of ideas have often captured the essence of new patterns of thought. "Knowledge is power" summarized the inductive method introduced by Francis Bacon in the seventeenth century somewhat like "The unexamined life is not worth living" caught the essence of Socrates' humanistic thinking in the fourth century B. C. Even homely philosophers have couched important truths in such epigrams as "A stitch in time saves nine" and "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

A band of immigrant preachers from Scotland and Ireland on the American frontier in the early nineteenth century embarked upon a reformation within the churches that eventually led to three new denominations, even though they did not intend for that to happen. The Disciples of Christ, Churches of Christ, and Christian Churches grew out of this effort, numbering today around five million members. The intention of the pioneers, however, was to start no new church but to launch a movement within the existing churches for the unity of all Christians. Since they appealed to "a restoration of the ancient order" it has often been called the Restoration Movement, though they usually thought of themselves as reformers.

Some of the slogans they came up with tell the story. There was, for instance, "We speak where the scriptures speak and we are silent where the scriptures are silent," coined by Thomas Campbell in 1804. It shows how they chose to be non-creedal, which was a revolutionary concept in the churches on the American frontier, which were unduly influenced by Calvinism. Campbell did not mean, of course, that all the components of the on-going of the church are stipulated in the New Testament, as if it were a blueprint for all details, but that only the Bible, apart from human creeds, would be the rule of faith and practice, and that nothing would be required of Christians except what is clearly set forth in scripture.

Since unity was their business, they found slogans that capsulized their thought, such as "In matters of faith unity, in matters of opinion liberty, in all things love." They borrowed this from the Reformation under Luther, which was originally stated as *In fundamentals unity, in non-fundamentals liberty, in all things charity.* It stands today as the church's most generally accepted epigram and yet the most widely neglected. Everyone agrees that we should unite on the fundamentals and graciously allow for differences in opinions, but we have difficulty agreeing on what is a matter of faith and what is a matter of opinion. But these reformers were convinced they had the answer: matters of faith (the fundamentals) are explicitly set forth in scripture, such as the seven unities of Ephesians 4, while opinions are the deductions drawn from what the Bible says, and often from what the Bible says nothing about.

Another unity motto was "We are free to differ but not to divide," which reflects their intolerance for a divided church, as is seen in Paul's *Is*

Christ divided? If Christ is not divided, the church cannot be divided. We cannot solve our problems by walking out and starting "a true church," lest Christians end up with hundreds of "true" churches, which unfortunately is what has happened. The answer, they said, was to allow for differences and diversity within the church, looking for conformity only on the fundamentals of the faith. This is why Thomas Campbell further stated, "The Church of Christ on earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one." By its very nature it is one and cannot be divided. It became his goal, therefore, to recapture or restore the church's innate but lost oneness. It was a noble goal.

These pioneers practiced what they preached. Even though they were two or three separate unity movements, by 1832 they declared themselves one people in a gathering in Lexington, Ky., uniting the forces generally associated with Barton W. Stone and Alexander Campbell. At that time they numbered about 25,000, but by the close of the Civil War they had grown to upwards of a quarter of a million. Unity was their plea, and with it came more epigrams. Stone liked to say, "Let Christian unity be our polar start," by which he meant that it is only a united church that can fulfill the mission of converting the world. They also insisted that "Christian unity is our business," which shows that they knew where they were going.

Second and third generations often compromise the ideals of the first, and this is what happened to what might be called the Stone-Campbell unity movement. A new leadership emerged that lost sight of the vision expressed in the slogans, and so opinions were crystallized into tests of fellowship and deductions into unwritten creeds. Part of the movement became exclusivistic, assuming that they and they alone were the true church. While the pioneers had insisted in still another slogan that they were "Christians only," believing that in that name all believers could unite, the new leadership supposed that they were the only Christians. By the turn of the twentieth century the movement that had been launched to unite the Christians in all the sects had itself divided. It is ironic that "unitists" should become so divisive, for they continued to divide something like once every decade in the twentieth century.

But truth crushed to earth, as the poet suggests, has a way of rising again. The ideals of the pioneers live on among these people. Thousands who are unity conscious are looking for ways to heal the factious wounds within and to rebuild the movement that called for the equality of all Chrisitans. A layman from one of the segments of this movement mixes judgment with hope in his view of the future:

"It is time for all of us to rise above the narrow partisan approach and to restore the spirit of the restoration movement. It means a recapture of the true sense of brotherhood in Christ Jesus based on the new birth. It does not mean the adoption of a single thing that you regard as an innovation or which you cannot conscientiously condone. It does not involve a change of procedure where you worship. It does involve a change of heart toward those baptized believers who do not proceed as you do. It does not require surrender of any truth you hold, or of anything you hold to be a truth. *It only involves renunciation of the greatest error Satan ever palmed off upon us: the fallacy that we can argue ourselves into unity, split ourselves into harmony and divide ourselves into oneness."* (Arthur T. Boone, *A Trimming of the Wick*, p. 117)

(This essay was prepared for *Letters*, a magazine that circulates among college students who have no particular knowledge of our history. We hope it will give them some insight into the "spirit" of Christian Church-Church of Christ backgrounds. — *Editor*)

BOOK NOTES

Walter Wilson of Des Moines ordered 25 copies of *The Fool of God,* a historical novel on Alexander Campbell, last year and again this year. Curious as to why he would buy so many, I inquired and learned that he gives them away. That impresses me as a sensible way to show liberality. If you don't give any copies of this fascinating book away, you will at least want one for yourself, which we can supply at 5.50 postpaid.

Memoirs of Alexander Campbell was out-of-print almost as long as it was in print, and it will likely be out-of-print again before long. It is 19.95, postpaid. If that seems high, remember it is two volumes in one, and it is the most important work ever published on our history.

More good stuff on our heritage is *Crying in the Wilderness* by a professor at Lipscomb College on the life of David Lipscomb. 12.95 pp.

A subscriber asked me to name the best one-volume commentary in print, and I named *Peake's Commentary on the Bible,* even though I did not stock it. It is acclaimed at home and abroad as the best. Now completely revised and updated, it is available at 34.95 pp. We now have it as part of our offerings to our readers. It is a library of several volumes combined into one. It is phenomenal how much they put between two covers, all A-1 stuff.

The Lord Is My Shepherd is an exposition on selected psalms by the late William Barclay. It was his intention to do this on much of the OT, but this is as far as he got. 5.50 postpaid.

Both volumes of *Johnson's Notes* are now in one volume. Long a favorite among our people and highly reliable, the price is 11.50 pp.

Life and times of Jesus the Messiah by Edersheim is another of the books that are libraries within themselves, this one being 858 pages. It is such a classic that you can study it for a lifetime and then pass it on. 18.95 pp.

Everybody is reading and watching James C. Dobson these days, a psychiatrist with Christian commitment who is saying important things about the home. For 8.95 we will send you his latest, *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives.*

Bound volumes of this journal are available, even though our last, the 1979 edition, is still not ready. We have but a few copies left of *The Restoration Mind,* 1971-72, at 4.95. In short supply also is *The Word Abused,* 1975-76, at 5.95. If you want either of these, you should order at once. Also available are more recent titles: *The Principles of Unity and Fellowship,* 1977, and *The Ancient Order,* 1978, both at 5.50.